

CONCERNING
THE
Sinfulness }
Danger } of Infidelity.
Remedies }

A
SERMON

Preached at *Whitehall*,

Feb. 16. 16⁶⁷₂₂.

BY
SETH Lord Bishop of Sarum.



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THE
SINFULNESS
O F
INFIDELITY.

Heb. III. 12.

Take heed brethren, lest there be in any of you, an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.--Exhort one another daily.



Shall not spend time in a disputation concerning the Author of this Epistle, *viz.* whether it were *Paul*, or *Barnabas*, or *Luke*, or *Clemens*, or *Apollos*, &c. but shall with the Church of England, suppose *S. Paul* to have been the Author of it.

A 2

If

The Sinfulness

If the Author of it be not infallibly knownen, this ought not to detract from its Authority.

Most of the other Epistles have been acknowledg'd to be of divine Authority, because they were known to have proceeded from Apostolical writers.

This (on the contrary) hath been concluded to be an Apostolical Epistle, proper to the young Charakterem, by reason of that divine and Apostolical Spirit, which to those who have had their Senses exercised, hath manifestly appeared in it.

If it were lawful (in this sense) to compare spiritual things with spiritual; I should not fear to affirm, that this Epistle hath in it some peculiar advantages; Compared with some other of the Epistles. (Advantages, I mean, of usefulness, not of Authority, seeing all of them issued from the same Spirit.)

The design of it is General, Fundamental, Comprehensive, not Private, Circumstantial, Occasional; And it hath peculiarly conveyed to the Church the great treasures. ¶ A Compleat Model,

or

or System, of Christian Divinity. And
3. the Way of that Analogy, and manner
of ratiocination, whereby the true Spi-
rit, and meaning of the Types and Pro-
phesies of the Old Testament is to be
found out and applied.

It was directed to the Hebrews; That
is, to those of the Jewish Nation, who
had received the Gospel, and made a
Profession of Christianity. And the
main Scope and design of it, is to pre-
serve the Professors of Christianity
from Apostacy and Infidelity.

The means used to this purpose; are
partly Didactical, and partly Protrepti-
cal; Demonstrating the truths of the
Gospel, and then urging the Professors
of those truths, to be steadfast in the
faith, and to beware of Infidelity.

The Method here used is a mixt me-
thod of Doctrine and Application; Dog-
matical truths and pathetical Exhorta-
tions continually interwoven.

He begins with the Great foundation Chap. 1.
of our faith. Christ is the Son of God,
the brightness of his glory; better then
the Angels. Wherefore if the Word Chap. 1.
spoken by Angels was stedfast, how

A 3 shall

4. The Sinfulness

shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

Chap. 3.

From the Comparison of Christ with Moses, he concludes against Hardness of Heart and Infidelity.

§. 6. 7. 8.

He demonstrates the Priesthood of Christ to be more Excellent than that of Aaron; and in the midst of his argument, he falls into an Application, or Corollary, concerning the dreadful Condition of them that fall away.

This is his design, and method, thorowout the Epistle; Whatever Doctrine he is upon, this is still the drift and aim of all his Applications, namely to preserve the Professors of Christianity, from Apostacy and Infidelity.

3. 5.

The words, which I have chosen, are a Reiteration or Reinforcement of an Application, or Corollary, arising from the Consideration of the Excellency of Christ above Moses. Moses was faithful in the house as a Servant; Christ as a Son, over his own house. This house are we if we hold fast our faith.

Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith,
Harden not your hearts—

Take

Take heed brethren, lest ——

I say, the words are an *Use of Exhortation*, and in them are considerable,

1. The Persons to whom directed: Professors of Christianity, expressed in the Word *Brethren*.

2. Matter or Object about which it is conversant, *Unbelief*: heart *unbelief*.

3. Form of Exhortation *by way of Caveat*. *βλέπετε*. take heed.

Now every *Caveat* implies,

1. Evil in the thing.

2. Danger of the thing.

3. That there are wayes and means to prevent it. This is implied in the *Caveat*, and expressed in words following.

My design, at this time, will be to enforce the Exhortation of the Text: And seeing that every Application is a *Consequence* or *Corollary* arising from some *Antecedent Proposition*, and the force of it is finally resolved into the truth and evidence and concernment of that *Antecedent*: Therefore it will be necessary to draw out that *Antecedent* by reflecting briefly upon the Text as it lies in the *Series* of the Epistle.

A 4 I. Then,

I. Then, for the Persons. They are
3. 1.
6. 4. here styled Brethren, and elsewhere,
Holy Brethren, Partakers of the heavenly Calling. They were ~~children~~
baptized into the *Profession* of
the Gospel, they had *tasted* of the
Word of God, and the power of the
world to come.

II. The Matter. *Unbelief*, or rather
Disbelief, (*not Negative Infidelity*,
but a positive Revolting from the
faith which they had professed) *Ge-*
n erally, a Disbelief of the *Word of*
God; *Particularly*, a Disbelief of
the Gospel, as to the *Doctrines*, or
Promises, or *Threatnings* thereof.

III. For the *Form* that which is here
 expressed by βλέπετε (look to it) is in
 the other forms of *Exhortation*, thoro-
 rowout the Epistle, expressed by
 termes of the greatest *Emphasis* and
 earnestnesse imaginable, Let us Fear
 lest we fall short, 4. 1.

Labour to enter, 4. 11.

Use diligence, not be slothful,
6. 11, 12.

Press earnestly, draw near, hold
 fast, 10. 22.

Scro-

*κειμοτέρες προσχει μὴ πόλε μα-
ερπυῶμεν.* Let us give more diligent heed lest by any means we should let it slip, 2.1.

So that the Summe of the Apostles Argumentation is this: *The last resolution of all the Obligation of men, is into reasons of Duty and of Interest.*

If there be *Wickedness* in *Infidelity*, it is matter of *Duty*, if there be *Danger* in it, and *Danger* of it, it is matter of *Interest* and *Concernment* to Beware of it.

This *Heart of Unbelief* is an *Evil heart* (*καρδία πονηρά*) there is *Wickedness* in it. It grieves the Spirit of God; It provoked him so, that he sware in his wrath, that he would take Vengeance for it: there is *Danger* in it. Yet it was a thing *Ordinary* and *common* amongst the *Fathers* of these Hebrews, it was neque *Novum*, neque *Rarum*, There is *Danger* of it.

" It is the *Duty* and *Concernment* " of every one *Professing Christianity* " to take heed lest there be in them an " *heart of Unbelief*; and to use all means " to prevent it. This is the Ante- " cedent. Where-

Wherfore take heed brethren, &c.—
 (which is the Exhortation by way of
 Caveat; — *Exhort one another daily,*
 &c. which is the way to prevent it.)

So then for the enforcement of the
 exhortation upon the whole matter, I
 am to speak

I. *Of the Evil of Infidelity.*

II. *Of the Danger of falling into it.*

III. *Of the meanes of preventing it.*

And then to conclude with

IV. *The Exhortation of the Text.*

In speaking of the *Evil of Infidelity*, I shall not discourse at large, but confine my self to an enquiry into two pretenses (Which having been broached in the late times of *Infidelity towards the King*, are said to have operated very far towards a general *Apostacy from the faith*, and the production of *Infidelity towards God*) both which appealing to the tenor of the *Scriptures*; must be examined by them.

The first is of a famous Author, and it is this, That the *Scriptures* do not make *Infidelity* to be a *Sin*, at the time of the delivery of the *Scriptures*.

The

The second is of a Writer more obscure, but in it self, so agreeable to the disposition of the present generation, that it hath possessed the minds of many; it is this, that

Although Infidelity (according to the Scriptures) in the times of Christ and his Apostles, were sinful, and inexcusable; yet in our times, it is excusable. These are the pretences to be examined.

The Substance of the Gospel, as it immediately relates to Christian duty, is summarily reduced to the *Doctrines* and *Injunctions* of our Lord Christ, and his Apostles.

The Author of Leviathan (cap. 42, pag. 286.) tells us in plain terms, that "We do not read any where (in the Scriptures) that they which received not "the Doctrine of Christ, did therein "Sin.

" And again, that the *Injunctions* of Christ, and his *Apostles*, men might refuse without sin.

Now concerning this assertion, I cannot chuse but say, that had I not been acquainted with the works of that author

thour (especially those relating to religion) I should exceedingly wonder at it, because it supposes men never to look into their Bibles, which is the thing it would persuade.

Mat. 22.42. In the 21. of Matth. Our Saviour asks the Jewes this question, *Did ye never read in the Scriptures such a thing?* a question which I must repeat to the Assertors of this doctrine. Did they never read in the Scriptures the Sinfulness, the Danger, the Heynowsness of Infidelity? Surely he that runs may read it.

Luc. 9.41. Our Saviour Christ, before his death, did oftentimes vehemently rebuke his Disciples, for Infidelity, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I endure you? (*Quousque tandem abutemini patientiâ nostrâ?*) And after his Resurrection, he calls them fools and slow of heart, for unbelieving: Did they never read these *Increpations?*

The Author of this Epistle, and the rest of the Apostles, do every where vehemently and earnestly dehort from Unbelief. *Did they never read these Dehortations?*

In the 8 of John, Christ tells the Jewes,

Fews, that if they believe not, they ^{Jo. 8. 24.}
shall dy in their Sins. That the wrath of
God abideth on them, that he that be-
lieveth not, is damned already. Did
they never read these *Denunciations*?

^{3. 36.}

Yes ! these last, it seems this Author
had read, & as his manner is, thinking he
could accommodate an answer to these,
he hath pronounced securely of all the
rest: To these he saith that they import
onely a *non-remission* of the sins com-
mitted against the laws of their Country;
(that they should dy in them;) but that
they do not evince, any sinfulness to be
in *Infidelity*; Wherefore I must crave
licence to proceed.

The *Apostle* in the 21 of the Revela- ^{4.}
tions, give a Catalogue of such sinners as ^{R. 21. 8.}
are of the highest rank, Such as are most
abominable in the eyes of God, Such as
are to have their portion in that lake
which burneth with fire and brimstone,
and he puts *Unbelievers* in the head of
this Regiment The fearful and “ *Un-*
“ *believers*, and *Abominable*, and *Mur-*
“ *shers*, and *Whoremongers*, and *Sorcer-*
“ *ers*, and *Lyars* shall have their portion
“ in that lake.

But

Obj. 1. But it may be, perhaps; that the Scripture doth not in plain and express termes, affirm Infidelity to be Sintul!

Ref. 1. The Text tells us plainly and expressly, that an heart of unbelief is *κακία πονηρά* (not *κακή* but *πονηρά*, not incommodious but wicked.)

Obj. 2. But Philosophers and Mathematicians; (pretending Strictnes & demonstration in discourse) regard not general words; but have recourse to the Definitions of things, and from thence proceed to affirm or deny the Attribution which is under question. Let us therefore have recourse to the definition of Sin.

Those who have spoken most accurately concerning the nature of Sin, they have resolved, that the formal notion of it, consists in a departure from God. it is *Aversio à Deo, & Conversio ad creaturam.*

Jer. 2.12. In the second of Feremy, and 12. we find the Prophet as it were in *furore sacro* (in a prophetic rage) breaking forth into this Exclamation. " Be astonished, " O ye heavens, be ye horribly afraid, be " very desolate saith the Lord! What ailes the Prophet to cry so loud?

to make the heavens resound his *Exclamation*? my people (saith he) have committed two Great evils, they have Forsaken me, that's the first. An heart of unbelief, is an evil heart, in departing from the living God.

It is true that the Spirit of God in the Scriptures, doth not usually descend to Logical accuracy, to the *quatenus*, or *Causality*, to the observation of the rules of *κατὰ περιτονίαν*, *καὶ δὲ αὐτὸν*, *καὶ γόνην πρῶτον*.

And this makes it oft-times, harder to deal with men of perverse minds, than many do imagine. But the more rare this is, the more you will take notice of the Providence, when you shall consider, how accurately, and how fully, the Scripture hath determined that which is in Question.

In the 16. of Joh. 8. our Saviour tells them, that the Spirit shall rebuke the world of *Sin*, of *righteousness*, of judgement: Of *Sin*, Because they believe not on him. Joh. 3. 18. he that believeth not is *Condemned*, because he believeth not. 'Αὐτὸν ἐστιν οἱ κρίσις, the rejection of the Gospel is said to be the

Joh. 16.8.
3.18.
15.

the very Condemnation, So expressly is, the god's avlò, delivered to us, (by Causal and Identical propositions) in the Scripture; Who is it now, that can persuade us, that the Scriptures do not affirm, any Sinfulness to be in Infidelity?

Yes verily! the Scriptures not only teach us, that unbelief is a sin, but they teach us likewise

6. The Heinousness and Aggravation, the Sinfulness and Punishment of this Sin.

It was this that brought all other sin into the World; and every Premeditated sin arises from it. It hardens the heart, and sears the Conscience, and makes it bid defiance to the Lord of Glory.

Concerning David we read in the Psalms, that once he said in his Hap that all men are liars, did he revoke it when he was at leisure? No, the more he thought of it, the higher he proceeds, and becomes the more assured in this charge; Surely (saith he) Men of low degree are Vanity, and men of high degree are (not liars but) a Lie. Yet if one

one gives the lie to one of these liars, it is the utmost provocation ; it is the stated word of defiance, concluded fit to Neh. 23.19. justify the *Duel or the Stab*. On the other side, God glories in this, that he is not a man that he should lie, that the strength of Israel will not lie, yet infidelity gives him the lie. “*He that believeth not God makes him a Liar.*” (1 Joh. 5. 10.)

7. I desire to know what is that *exemplar*, whereby the *Heinousness* of any sin is to be estimated.

Is it the *denunciation of Future Vengeance*? “*The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty Angels, in flaming fire, taking Vengeance upon Unbelievers, and they shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord and from the presence of his power.*

Is it *Old or New, Past, or present Instances of Vengeance*? Were not the body of this people newly cut off for unbelief? And of ancient dayes, whose were the *Carcasses* that fell in the *Wilderness*; and to whom did God swear in his

B wrath,

Heb. 3. wrath, that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

Consider but the story, from whence the Exhortation of the Text arises. How God was provoked through unbelief. The text tells us, that he was Moved, he was Tempted, he was Grieved, he was Provoked, till he sware in his wrath —

Ps. 95. The words are taken out of the 93 Psalm, to which the 78. is parallel.
 " They were (saith the Psalmist) a stubborn and rebellious Generation; They
 " tempted God, and spoke against him,
 " Therefore the Lord heard this and
 " was wroth: So a fire was kindled
 " against Jacob and anger against Israel;
 " Because they believed not in God, and
 " trusted not in his Salvation —
 " When God heard this, he was
 " wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel,
 " he gave way to his Indignation,
 " wrath, anger, displeasure and Fea-
 " lousy.

I conceive, now the first Question to be stated, viz. Whether (according to the tenor of the Scripture) Infidelity were sinful and dangerous, in the time of

of the delivery of the *Scriptures*: I proceed to the second Question, viz. (*However it was in antient times.*)

2. Whether Infidelity, be not in such times as ours Excusable?

My meaning is this: Whether (speaking according to Scriptural grounds, and reason) Now that *Miracles*, extraordinary gifts and Prophesies are ceased, Infidelity be not become *Excusable* (however it might be *Sinful* and *inexcusable* during the time when Prophesies and Miracles were in use?)

The first verse of this Epistle (to the Hebrews) tells us what powerful and noble motives to believe, God had afforded to the *Fathers*.

God himself was pleased to speak to them, πολυμεγῶς & πολυβόρως, at sundry times, and in divers manthers.

In the Times of the Patriarchs, Judges, Kings, and Prophets by the Wayes of Visions, Dreams, Voices, Similitudes, Urim, and by divers miracles and wonders.

So likewise, for those that are here exhorted; About the time of the Writing of this Epistle; God had spoken

18 The Sins

to them by his Son (the brightness of his Glory, the image of his person) And by the Apostles, to whom also he bare Witness, by mighty signes and wonders, by divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Now that such men as these, who had so great advantages to bring them to believe, should be severely punished for Infidelity, I am perswaded there is hardly any man, but thinks it very just and reasonable.

That such as had seen the wonders of God, in Egypt and the Wilderness, so manifestly miraculous, so often repeated, and yet for all this would not believe, that their Carcasses should fall in the Wilderness.

That Ananias and Sapphira who had known the miracles which had been done by the Apostles, should think to Censure the Apostles: it deserved the Judgment that befell them.

As for our selves had we lived in the times of Miracles or Prophesies, we doubt not but we should have believed. Or, as Philip said, shew us the father, and it sufficeth. Could we but once see a miracle

racle, or talk with one returning from the dead ; it should suffice, we would believe.

But seeing it is now many hundreds of years, Since these things are ceased, and we have nothing left us, Prater miraculorum famam ; If we shall not believe the Gospel ; by some it is openly pretended, and by many it is secretly imagined, that, in this case we may be Excused.

I could wish that the time would serve, Clearly to rid away this phantasm ; In order to it, I shall briefly doe three things.

1. Shew that this Phantaſtical imagination is no new invention but that it hath of old, been the conceit of Abominable Hypocrites.

2ly. I shall inquire a little into the grounds of this Conceit, and shew the mistake of those suppositions, into which it is resolved.

3ly. I shall shew, that our Saviour (Knowing the thoughts of men) hath taken particular care to prevent this Imagination ; and hath clearly decided the matter in Question.

1.

2.

3.

I. Though the present age be fruitful in inventions tending this way, yet this hath been Anticipated by the Wits of former times.

Luc. 11. 47. In the 11 of Luke 47. We finde the Scribes and Pharisees, building the Sepulchers of the Prophets, whom their fathers had killed.

Mat. 23. 30. If we would know, what they pretended, in so doing, we shall find it in the parallel place of Matthew. They said, if we had been in the dayes of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them, in the blood of the Prophets.

That these men, did not believe the Prophets, it is manifest ; Christ tells them, if they had believed the Prophets, they would have believed him : for they wrote of him.

But that they would have beleived the Prophets, (and not have murdered them) had they lived in their times, this they pretend : and it is very probable they had that opinion.

Yes Verily ! had they lived in the dayes of Miracles and Prophesies, they would have believed, the very con-

ceit which is now Pretended!

But the Truth is, these men were abominable Hypocrites, and the cause of their Unbelief, was not the want of *miracles* and *Prophecies* but *Carnal prejudice*, and *interest*, and the *Vile affections* of their hearts. Did not Christ work *miracles*? Was not he that Prophet which was to come? Yet they took him, and with wicked hands they slew him, and brought upon themselves the *bloud* of all the Prophets.

But 2ly. If we shall examine the bottom of this fancy, and resolve it into its *Principles*, we shall finde that it supposes these things.

1. That the *want* of the sight of *miracles*, is sufficient to *justify* unbelief.

2. That to live in the *very age* of *miracles*, is apter to create belief, than to be born and educated, in a believing nation, after the world hath been *convinced* by the *miracles* of former times (which is our Case.)

3. That the *bare sight* of *miracles*, is of it self alone, sufficient to create belief

lief, in every person that should see them.

Of which suppositions, the first is contrary to common Reason, and the two later are contrary to Scriptural Reason, and to the experience of the world.

I. If the want of the sight of miracles were enough to justify Infidelity, then for every Dogma to be believed, Every Individual person, were to expect the sight of miracles; which if it should happen, the wonder would cease, and miracles become No miracles, by the frequency of the performances of them, and so they would be inept to create belief.

Every work of nature, is in it self a miracle; Who would not think it easier to recover a man, (who had all his parts and humours already formed,) from the dead, than from that liquid principle whereof Job speaks, to raise up flesh and skin, bones and sinews: to Advance an understanding creature, capable of Adoring or blaspheming the maker of him? Yet that is a miracle, and this is none, onely through the rarity of one, and frequency of the other.

Again

Again, if every one were to see *miracles*, the merit of faith would be taken away. "Jesus said unto Thomas, because thou hast seen -- thou hast believed, Blessed are they that have not seen, yet have believed. This for the first supposition.

2. The second is this, that to live in the very age of *miracles*, is apter to create a belief, than to live in a believing nation, on a good time after the times of *Miracles*.

But, contrary to this, we have instances both in Jews and Gentiles. After near 4000 years. How pertinaciously doe the Jews adhere to *Moses*, against whom their fathers *Murmured*, and *rebelled*, notwithstanding the sight of all his *miracles*; and when he had wrought that great *miracle upon Corah* and for his rebellion, the next day they *rebelled again*.

And we find now the whole world, (especially the wiser part) Converted to Christianity, whereas the Apostles complain of the paucity of professors, and the Infidelity of the Jews, in the Age of Christ and his Apostles, was so great

great and resolute that it hath a fatal operation upon that nation unto this day.

I suppose, I may take it for granted, that the Condition of the Jews in our Saviour's time, was in respect of Moses, the same (as to the matter in Question) with our Condition in respect of Christ.

The tradition of the law, was accompanied with mighty signes and wonders. And so was likewise the tradition of the Gospel.

In the times succeeding Moses, God for a season continued the sensible manifestation of his presence, by miracles. So he did likewise in the times succeeding Christ.

But before the time of our Saviour both miracles and Prophesies had a long time

time ceased. We see not our Tokens Psalm 74.
(saith the Psalmist) there is not one
Prophet left ; *as it is with us at this*
day.

Onely , they had the books of Moses
and the Prophets , *Fust so Conveighed*
and propounded to them , *as our Scrip-*
tures haye been to us.

So that , if the Question be proposed
concerning those Jews , whether the
present miracles of Christ , or the com-
plexion of Motives which they had , to
induce them to believe the writings of
Moses , were apter to create belief , It
is the same with our Question , Whe-
ther the living in The time of Miracles ,
or our Motives ; are more powerful to
believing . To determine which Questi-
on ; we may observe ; That the Apo-
stles after the sight of all our Saviours
miracles , Contynned in unbelief , till
he had opened unto them the Scrip-
tures , of Moses and the Prophets . That
after many miracles , he refers the Jews
to the searching of the Scriptures ;
(bringing them *a notiori ad ignotius.*)
And in the 5 of John and the 47.
he decides this Question by another , Jo. 5. 47.
if

" if ye do not believe the writings of
 " Moses, how shall ye believe my Words?

Thus much concerning the 2 supposition.

3. The 3 is this, that the sight of
 miracles, is of it self alone, sufficient
 to bring every person to believing.

We ought indeed to owne it, to the
 eternal Glory of our Blessed Redeemer,
 that the Faith of Christians is founded
 upon his Miracles as well as on his Do-
 ctrine, and example. And he himself
 tells the Jews, that if he had not done
 miracles they should not have had sin
 (i. e. the Sin of Infidelity.) But Now
 to dream of miracles, and hanker after
 them; or to think to Excuse our Infidi-
 lity; for want of the sight of them,
 (as if that alone would certainly make
 believers of us all,) it argues that we
 have been sloathful readers of the Scrip-
 tures.

It hapned to our Saviours *miracles* as
 it did to his *Preaching*; according to
 his parable of the sower. Some of them
 lighted upon hearts that were *honest*
and good, and brought forth the fruit of
 believing. Others fell by the way side,
 or

or upon stony places, or among the Thorns.

The prepossession of their minds, by an expectation of a temporal Messiah, in the Rulers; The fear of persecution by them in the People; The Cares of the World, and deceitfulness of riches, The pleasures and lusts, to which the Austerities of the Gospel-rules, were opposit; and Many other prejudices, deeply rooted in the hearts of a pervers and foward Generation, prevailed against the sight of miracles; and None were more pervers and resolute unbelievers, then some of those, who had the Advantage of this great argument for believing.

If the sight of Miracles alone, were sufficient to produce belief, in all kinds of Spectators, certainly the Scribes and Pharisees, (who by their learning were able to Judge of a miracle,) the Countrymen and Kinsmen of Christ (with whom he was most Conversant,) should have been most Eminent in believing.

But behold the enchantment of prejudice and Carnal Interest! In the 5. of Luke 21. The Pharisees and Doctors saw

Luc. 5.21.

saw the *miracles* of Christ, and yet they concluded him a *Blasphemer*. And when he had healed, him that was borne blind; they (hypocritically) bad the man give Glory to God, and said they knew that Jesus was a sinner.

Joh. 9. 24. They turn'd his *miracles* into wantonness, fain'd themselves Just men, that they might tempt him, i.e. put a trick upon him, demanding a *sign* for a *sight*, onely to satisfy their wanton Curiosity.

Ma. 13. 58. As for his *Countrymen*, this Prophet had no honour there, he did not many *miracles*, among them, because of their *unbelief*. His friends said he, *Mar. 3. 21.* was beside himself, and went to lay hold on him.

Jo. 6. 10. As for the *People*, In the 6 of John we find, that Christ fed 5000 men with 5 loaves and 2 small fishes, so that they said this is of a truth that Prophet. But the *very next day* (ver. 22.) the *very* men that had eaten of the *loaves*: (26) Said unto him what *sign* shewest thou that we may believe? what dost thou work! (30.) as if a *miracle* had not been a *Signe*!

He

He wrought a miracle among the ^{Ma. 5.17.}
Gadarens, and they besought him to be
 gone. Others were offended at him,
 and cast him out of their City. The
 issue of all his miracles, was this; Some ^{Jo. 7. 12.}
 said he was a good man, Others Nay!
 but he deceiveth the people. And ^{Jo. 10. 20.}
 they said he had a Devil and was mad.

Nay! when he hung upon the cross they
 acknowledged his miracles, and jeered him
 with them; He saved others; himself he
 cannot save; let him do one more mira-
 cle, let him come down from the Cross,
 and we will believe him. So vain is
 the pretence of those, who think to ex-
 cuse their Infidelity, because they cannot
 see a miracle! So false are the Grounds
 of that opinion.

3. Briefly! to bring this Argument ^{3.}
 to an issue.

If it were granted to these persons,
 to see a miracle, what kind of miracle
 would they chuse, to convince their un-
 derstandings, and settel them in religi-
 on? We are here I confess *in loco*
Conjecturali, and no man can tell
 what miracle another man would
 chuse, but I am persuaded, that
 which

which most men would agree upon, as most conducing to that purpose whereof we are speaking would be this; that to assure them of the *Immortality of the Soul* and of the rewards and punishments of the world to come, and to satisfy their *Curiosity* in some other doubts and scruples; They might once be allowed to see and converse with some one, that might rise from the dead who might resolve their *Questions*, concerning the condition of those that are in Hades.

3. I say then, that our Saviour who knew, what was in man, and needed not that any one should tell him foreseeing this *Phantastical* conceit, hath shewed the folly of it, and preoccupied this vain resort.

Luc. 16. 23. In the 16 of Luke 27. Dives makes it his request to Abraham; that he would send Lazarus from the dead; to testify to his brethren, those things which these men dream of.

Abraham refers them to the *Scriptures*, which were in the same manner recommended to them as our *Scriptures* are

are to us. "They have Moses and the
Prophets, &c. let them hear them.
He saith unto him, "Nay fa-
ther Abraham, but if one went to
them from the dead, they would
believe.

And he (Abraham) said "If they
hear not Moses and the Prophets,
neither will they be persuaded though
one rose from the dead.

This I take to be a clear and a full de-
termination of the matter in Question;
And if any one should imagine, that
this determination was but Conjectural,
Our Saviour afterward tries the Experi-
ment, and raises another Lazarus from
the dead. Ioh. 11.

What was the effect of this mans co-
ming from the dead, did it Convert the
High Priest or the Scribes the rulers or
the people; nay, but from that very
day they took counsel together how
they might put Jesus to death. And
the Chief Priests Consulted, how they
might put Lazarus to death Also. 53.

Upon these Considerations; we may in-
fallibly Conclude, that Infidelity in Such
times as ours, is no more excusable,

then it was in the dayes of Christ or his Apostles ; the times of miracles and prophecies .

So much of the first Supposition , in the Caveat of the text , the Sinfulness of Infidelity , in General at all times , And the Inexcusableness in our times , which makes it our Duty to take heed of it ;

II. I pass to the second supposition , concerning the Danger of falling into it , which makes it our concernment and Interest to beware of it . For if this be clear , the Exhortation will be power'ul , take heed brethren , &c.

Now , the Danger of falling into infidelity , is in it self so conspicuous , and made so sensible by every day's experience , that I wish the proof of it were difficult , so as to Justify a studious & laborious demonstration of it .

At once , to shorten my discourse , and to remove the suspicion of any Satyrical reflexion upon those that hear me ; I shall shew , that the Greatest Advantages , have not preserved the best of men , from sometimes falling into Infidelity . Take heed therefore brethren .

The

The greatest *Helps* and *Advantages* against unbelief. I conceive to be these ensuing.

1. *Evidences of Gods Presence.* 2. Or these lighting on a good understanding. 3. At least upon the Ablest of men. 4. Such as have held Communion with God. 5. or have been eminent for the habit and exercise of faith. 6. or these with warnings to prevent the Danger of falling. 7. And those reiterated. Yet all these, have not preserved good men from sometimes falling. A word of each.

1. First then, to begin with the persons in the Context, What greater *Evidences of the Presence of God* can be Imagined, then they enjoyed; In Egypt in their passage over the red Sea, in the Wilderness, "my presence, saith "God, shall go along with you, They were conducted by a Pillar of a Cloud, &c. they were Supported, and Corrected by Visible and palpable instances of Gods power and presence. Yet they tempted and grieved the Spirit of God, by their *Infidelity*, for "they believed not for all his Wondrous Works.

2. But these *Jewes* were a *dull* and *stupid* people. If God should once manifest himself, to a *wise* and *understanding* person (Such as we take our selves to be) We may think it impossible to fall into unbelief.

I suppose it will be no disparagement to these *Objectors*, to say, that *Solomon* might be as *Wise* and *Knowing*, as *Wary* and *Philosophical* as they. And as for the *manifestation* of Gods presence, the Scripture tells us Expressly, that *God appeared* to him at *Gibeon*. Where he made a *promise* to him which he performed.

Kin. 11.5. Yet *Solomon* fell into the *grosseſt Infidelity*: to think there were *Gods* and *Goddesſes*, To worship *Aſteroth*, the *Goddeſſe* of the *Sidonians*, and *Milcom* the *Abomination* of the *Ammo-nites*.

3. But it may be yet Objected, that *Solomon* did this in the *Dotage* of his years, and his *Dotage* upon his *Idolatrous* wives, which turned away his heart, but that it *could not have pre-ceeded* from him, before his *understan-ding* was empayred.

Be-

Behold then a greater then Solomon ! even Adam in his full strength when he was newly made after the similitude of God , a little lower then the Angels. God several times appeared to him in the Garden ; Yet he fell through unbelief , and drew all his posterity into his ruine .

4. But Adam though he had perfection of Nature yet he wanted Grace , whereby he might have held Communion with God , which having been once enjoyed , would for ever have kept him from infidelity , or deliberate sin , which alwayes proceeds from it .

Consider then the case of David ! Sam. 16. of whom it is said , that the Spirit of ^{13.} Psal. 89.4. the Lord God came upon him ; That God himself made a Covenant with him , and Sware unto him by his holiness , that he would not fail him .

And as for David who was like unto him , for Devotion and Zeal , for spiritual Communion and intercourse with God ? He was the sweet singer of Israel ; and how often do we find , his spirit inebriated , and transported , in the

Celebration of his *divine* and *ravishing* *enjoyments*.

Yet we find him falling from all this height; and great and terrible was his fall; he went mourning for it all his days, and bowed down his head continually.

5. But perhaps it may be thought, that though *David* was an Excellent man, yet seeing his Eminency lay not in the gift of *Faith*, but in *Zeal*, or in some other *Grace*, the danger may not yet be so very considerable.

Behold then even *Abraham*: the Darling of the almighty, who conversed with God as a man converseth with his *Friend*: to whom God communicated his presence in *Dreams*, in *Visions*, in *Apparitions*, πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυ-*Γόρως*.

He was imbued with the *Habit* of *Faith*, he exerted it in the *noblest* exercise; he manifested it in the *heroical* degree; so that he became the *Father* of the *Faithful*.

Yet once we find him offending (tripping) at this stone of stumbling; equivocating through unbelief.

6 But

6. But all these instances were during the Ancient Dispensation, when the Communication of the presence of God was more obscure; before the fulness of time was come, when the word was made flesh and dwelt amongst men; and they saw his glory as the glory of the only begotten Son of God.

Besides! we do not find that they were particularly and distinctly warned of their danger, which may lessen the wonder of the fall.

Consider then the case, of Peter, the first of the Apostles. He had been closely conversant with Christ during all the time of his Ministry. Was a witness of his miracles, saw his Transfiguration, Heard the Voice which came to him from the Excellent glory, saying this is my beloved Son — Pgl 1, 19.

As for his faith, he it was, that made that Confession, upon which the the Christian Church is founded. And Christ had prayed for him that his faith should not fail.

He was a valiant man; and he undertook that though he died, he would neither forsake, nor deny, his Master,

When Christ forewarns him, plainly and punctually, that his faith would fail him. That very night, before a certain hour; So that it was impossible he should be surprised.

You know his *Undertakings* and of his *Failings* it is unnecessary to speak.

7. I know nothing now that can be alledged, against the general propensity of all men to Unbeleif, but this, that Peter was now *single and alone*, that he failed onely this time; when he was environd with *Bills and Staves* and in Danger of his Life.

Wherefore let us call to mind the Case of all the *Apostles*, in the great Foundation of our Faith the *Article of Christs Resurrection*. When these temptations were away.

The resurrection of the dead was in those times so commonly believed, that it was conceived of Christ, that he was one of the Old Prophets risen from the Dead, and Herod said he was *John the Baptist* risen from the dead.

Of the resurrection, the *Apostles* had seen Experiments, in *Lazarus*, and in the

the bodies of the *Saints* which arose.

Concerning Christ's resurrection how plainly and often were they forewarned, After he was risen, how often were they told of it. Yet how grossly and often did they fail.

In the 8 of *Mark* 31 Christ tells his ^{Mar. 3.31.}
 "Disciples, that he should be killed,
 "and the 3 day he would rise again. He ^{32.} _{Mar. 3.7.}
 "spake this saying openly; So open- ^{62.}
 "ly that the *Jews* took notice of it (this ^{Mar. 36.}
 deceiver said that the third day he _{31.} ^{Mar. 16.13}
 would rise again) moreover he promi-
 sed them plainly that after he was ri-
 sen, he would go before them into ^{13.}
Ga-lie, and appointed them a certain
Mountain where they should see him.

Yet after he was risen; *Mary Magda-*
len told them that he had appeared to
 her. But they believed not *Mary Magd.*
Joanna, and *Mary the Mother of James*,
 told them the same, But their *Speech*
 seemed to them as *Idle tales*.

The 2 Disciples told the rest, that
 he had appeared to them going to *Em-*
maus, but they believed them not.

He appeared in the midst of ten of
 them at once, shewed them his hands
 and

and his side, But they believed not for joy.

Luc. 24.41.

Mat. 28.7.

Christ when appeared to the Women, bade them tell the Disciples and Peter, that according to his promise, they should see him in Galilee.

17

And the 11. Disciples went into Galilee, to a mountain which Jesus had appointed them, And when they saw him, they Worshiped, But some doubted.

Mat. 16.14.

So that Christ, almost in his last words, Upbraided them with their Unbelief—because they believed not them who had seen him, after he was risen.

So prone are even the best of men, after their highest attainments, under the best advantages, to fall sometime into Infidelity! So great is the danger of Unbelief!

It is true indeed, that all these, *Mic. 7.8.* might say with the Prophet, Rejoyce not against me O mine enemy, for though I fall, I shall arise again. Yet “all these things are written for our learning, that he that thinketh he standeth, may take heed least he fall. If these things have been done to the green tree,

tree, what may be done to the dry? If the worthies and the mighty have fallen (how have the mighty fallen?) ought not the feeble to take care? Yes certainly they ought.

And to use all means to prevent their falling, which is the third thing, supposed in the Caveat, and expressed in the words following "Take heed brethren least, &c. Exhort one another daily—

Now the *Meanes* to prevent the falling into *Infidelity* are the *Arguments* evincing the *truth* of the *Gospel* which are very *numerous*. Whereof I cannot now speak particularly.

The Apostle in this Epistle makes use of 2. sorts *viz.*

From } 1. Scriptures of the Old Testa-
ment.
} 2. Common Reason whereof I
shall speak a little.

The Argument from Reason is delivered in the 2. Chap. v. 3. 4.

"The Gospel was delivered by the Lord,
" and

"and confirmed (to us) by them that
"beard him.

"God also bearing them Witness
"with Signs and wonders, and divers
"miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost,

God bare witness to
Christ the Author of the Gospel:
And to the Apostles, the Promulgators
of the Gospel. Wherefore it is to be
believed.

The Antecedent of this Enthymem is
the sum of what I shall deliver.

Io. 8. 13. When the Pharisees said unto
"Christ, thy Record is not true, be-
cause thou bearest record of thy self.
"I am one (saith Christ) that bear re-
cord of myself, and the Father that
sent me, beareth witness of me.

18. Moreover he tells the Disciples that
25. 26. the Comforter should testify of him. And
27. ye also shall bear witness, because ye
have been with me from the beginning.

So that beside the Witness of the
Apostles, the Gospel had the Attestation
of all the persons of the Trinity; viz.,

Of the } 1. Father,
 } 2. Son,
 } 3. Holy Ghost,

x. God

1. God the Father bore witness to his Son; and that he did, by 1. *Visible Signes*, and 2. *Audible Voices*, 3. *by Mission of Angels*, 4. *by Cooperating in his Miracles, &c.*

1. At his *Nativity*, a new Star appeared. At his *Baptism* they saw the heaven opened, and the Spirit sent from the *Father* in the visible shape of a *Dove* and lighting upon him. Before his *Passion*, he was transfigured in their sight. And *At it the Sunne was eclipsed when the Moon was full, the Vail, the Rocks, rent, So that the Centurion said, Surely this man was the Son of God, Bodies of Saints were seen of many, all these were visible signes.*

2. *As for the בָּת קִוָּה* (the daughter of the Voice) In his *Baptism* Lo! ^{Mar. 3. 17.} *a* ^{17. 5.} voice from heaven, Saying, *This is my beloved Son—At his Transfiguration a Voice came out of a cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son — hear him. A little before his death, as he was Praying “Father, glorifie thy Name,* ^{Io. 12. 28} *There came a voice from heaven, Saying, “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.*

3. For

3. *For mission of Angels by the Father,* We find them still ready upon all occasions from before his Coming down, to the time of his Ascension into Heaven.

Luc. 1. 16. Before his Conception, the Angel *Gabriel* appeared to *Zachary* and to **19.**

Mar. 1. 20. *Mary*, before his Nativity to *Joseph* saying *fear not Joseph*. At the time of his

Luc. 2. 9 Nativity a whole Chorus appeared to the **31.** Sheapheards. In his Infancy an Angel

Mar. 2. 13 appeared twice to *Joseph*, admonishning him of his going to *Egypt* and his return from thence.

4. 11. In his Adult age they ministred to **Luc. 22. 43** him in his hunger; Before his death,

Mar. 28. 2. they strengthned him in his Agony;

Mar. 16. 6. After it, they rolled away the stone **Io. 20. 12.** from his Sepulcher;

Ac. 1. 16. They declared his resurrection; And in his Ascension, they stood by, and foretold his coming again to Judgement. Ye men of Galilee why stand ye gazing? This same Jesus —

4. The Father cooperated with him, according to that of our Saviour the father worketh hitherto and I work. — &c.

These

These are some of the *Attestations* of the Father.

2. *Christ bore witness of himself.* And this he did, by proveing himself to be the *Messiah*; viz. by fulfilling all the Prophesies relating to the Person or Offices; the *Life*, and the *Death* of the *Messiah*.

His Generation was such as cannot be declared, he was born at *Bethlem*, of the tribe of *Juda*, of the Family of *David*, about 490. years after the return from *Captivity*. When the *Scepter* was just now departed from *Juda*.

He performed not only the Substance of the Prophesies but all the Circumstances foretold, Concerning the *Life* and *Death* of the *Messiah*.

He was to be a *Prophet*, and so he was. The *Spirit* of the *Lord* anointed him to *preach*, and he spake as never man spake. He foretold many things to come, they all bare him witness.

2. He was to be a *King* and so he was. His *Name* was *Wonderful*; his Power was shewen throughout the *universal System of the World*, the *Angels* good

good and evil, the Heavens, Elements, Plants, Fishes, Brutes, Health and Sickness, Life and Death, were all obedient unto his Word.

3. He was to be a Priest and so he was. He made an Atonement by his Obedience, and by his sufferings to the least punctilio (to the taking of a little Vinegar) and when all things were fulfilled, He cryed with a loud voice τελέσαται it is finished, and he bowed his head and gave up the Ghost.

Moreover, for the Justification of his Gospel (and that he might leave no place for Infidelity;) he rose again from the dead, appeared to many Convincing them by all their senses; They saw him, They heard him, they felt his hands and his side, They Eat and Drank with him; They Conversed with him 40. dayes; He was seen by more then 500. at once; and (lastly,) in the sight of Many of them, he Ascended Visibly into Heaven.

These were some of the Testimonies, which our Lord Christ bore to himself.

3. The time would fail me, if I should speak

speak of all the Testimonies given by the *Holy Spirit.*

In his *Conception*, to *Mary*, fulfilling the Promise of *Gabriel*.

Before his *Nativity* to *Zachary* and *Elizabeth*, in his *Infancy* to *Simeon* and *Hanna*, In his *Baptism* to *John*. I knew
 "him not, saith John, but he that sent me to baptize, said unto me, upon whom
 "thou shalt see the *Spirit* descending
 "and resting on him, that is he: and I saw the *Spirit* descending: *Throughout*
 his whole *Ministry*, till his *Death*, the *Spirit* gave witness to him.

Moreover, In his *Resurrection* he was declared the *Son of God*, with power by the *Holy Ghost*. After his *Ascention*, the *Holy Ghost* fulfilled all his undertakings, *In that Great Manifestation at Pentecost*; at the time and place which *Christ* had undertaken for; A *manifestation* made to all the *Senses*, and to men of every nation under heaven, *Parthians* — besides a *Multitude* of other Instances.

Rom. 1.

Act. 2. 5.

Such were the *Attestations* given to *Christ* (the *Author* and finisher of our faith).

D

2. And

2. And for the Apostles (the Promulgators of it) Besides the Change of their Spirits from darkness to light, Whereby they were led out of Ignorance and Infidelity, into all Truth. And from torpid and pusillanimous persons, during the life of their Master, they became, when he was dead, the most active and magnanimous in the world. (I say, besides this Change) They had bestowed upon them, All things necessary (either for their, 1. Own Assurance, Or for the 2. Conviction of the World. (Concerning the truth of the Gospel which they delivered.)

I. As for themselves, Besides the Conversation with their Master before and after his Resurrection; they had 1. Apparitions of Angels. And to one of them Christ himself appeared after he was ascended to his father.

2. They had the *Bath Kol*. (Voices from Heaven) In the 9 of the Acts, We finde a Voice from Heaven maintaining a Dialogue with *Paul*; and at another time, a voice saying to *Peter*, Arise Peter, Kill and Eat.

3. They had extatical Visions.

Peter

Peter was in a *trance* (Act. 10. 10, 19.) Act. 22. 17
Paul rapt up to the third heaven.

4. *They had monitory Dreames,* Paul saw a man in a *Dream*, saying unto him, Come into Macedonia and help us.

5. *They had Impulses of the Spirit;* So Paul was *forbid* by the *Spirit*: to preach the Word in Asia: *Act. 16. 9.*

II. And for the *Conviction* of the *unbelieving World*

They had diversities of *gifts* and Cor. 12.
Different Administrations. To one was given the *Word of Wisdom*, to another the *Word of Knowledg*, to another *Faith*, to another the gift of *Healing*, to another *Miracles, Prophesies, Discerning of Spirits, The gift of Tongues.*

As it is in the words which I quoted,
“*God bare them witness with gifts of the Holy Ghost, and with signes and Wonders;* and that he did, so far, that I shall be justified by *Christ* himself, if I shall affirm, that the *Apostles* after his death, did greater miracles than he himself did in his life.

Of the same kind with our Saviours, some they performed, by means, having an appearance of greater strangeness

ness, (Christ healed by his touch, his word his spittle, Peter by his shadow, Paul by Handkerchiefs taken from his body.) But one great thing there was, wherein they exceeded; The Great and Manifest, and frequent Effusions of the Spirit, The Reception of it upon themselves, the communication of it to others, by Prayer, Preaching, Laying on of Hands; By these it was that the unbelieving world was convinced, and even Simon Magus himself, It is by the power and Vertue of those effusions that we are here met together at this time, that the World continues Christian at this day. And these are some of those standing means and Arguments, whereby the Propensity of our hearts to Infidelity may be overcome; and faith may be begotten, confirmed, recovered at this day: These are therefore to be revolved, Exhort one another dayly. To come therefore to a Conclusion.

My text it self is an Application, by way of Exhortation, Exhortations are enforced by Reasons of Duty and Concernment, and these I have hitherto endeavoured to lay before you.

If

If indeed there were no Sinfulness in Infidelity. Or, If in such times as ours, it were excusable. If there were no danger of falling into it, or no means left to remedy or prevent it; It would then indeed be to little purpose to Exhort men to beware.

But if the state of all these things is otherwise, if that be plain and evident, agreeable to Scripture, to Reason and to Experience; If the Speaker hath not beaten the Air, nor the hearers been careless and inattentive, I know not what can be required, to enforce and sharpen the exhortation.

If the time would suffer it, and I were speaking to a Common or Injudicious Auditory, I might think my self concerned, after all that hath been spoken to the understanding, to Apply my discourse to your affections, I should take unto me the various forms of Application used in this Epistle. I would Reprove, Rebuke, Exhort; I would cry aloud, and would not spare. I would lift up my voice like a Watchmans trumpet, warning you from the Lord, concerning that Spirit of irreligion and infidelity

which is said to have overspread the land.

I would take to my self a *Lamentation*, yea it shoulde be for a *Lamentation*, for the *Professors* of *Infidelity*, and the *Infidelity* of *Professors*, every where. But I may not now be permitted to enlarge upon these things. I may onely pray to God to give you understanding in all things, and beseech you earnestly to consider what hath been spoken, Concluding in the words of the Text, *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you, an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. Exhort one another dayly —*

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